gilded veins

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by bearclaws

Summary

I move closer to the man and look into his eyes. Deep ocean blue and a pain I cannot wait to taste. I lick a tongue over sharp, white teeth.

“Good evening.” My voice is laced with soft, dangerous magic. It immobilises the man in place at the dining table, every limb frozen. Only his face is left able to move, heavy-lidded eyes tracking my movements around his chair and tongue darting out to moisten his lips. “Welcome to my home.”

Vampire Hannibal Lecter has scented a change in Baltimore. He goes out hunting, and finds more than he bargained for.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1

bound in blood, the rabbit runs

feel its flesh between your teeth

hunter hunter, seeking game

bathed in wine, lost in shade

fangs lick honey by design

on your tongue, iron-coated

dark footprints lead the trail

crack the spine, caught in teeth

poured down throats and

gilded veins

Great lashings of pink and blue paint the sky, coloured talons cutting through the silken night. The moon's fingers caressing my cheek make my fangs ache. Last night she was hiding, but tonight she's a huge silver droplet in the wide expanse, out in full force and roiling my blood.

The wanton need to sink my teeth into sharp flesh crawls over my skin. When was the last time I sated the beast that lives within me? A flash of tender white in my mind; the feel of lace on my fingertips. *Too long.*

But I have other plans. My hunger must wait.

My search for the source of a new scent in Baltimore has led me to a bar, and I hesitate outside the door, the fluorescent lights from the sign casting a pink glow over my fine, dark suit. *The Chapel*. It's only a joke, of course. This ground isn't really consecrated. I'd feel it if it were.

Entering the bar, my wine-dark eyes adjust quickly to the low lighting and my ears strain at the raucous laughter within. A thousand scents battle for supremacy but I sift through them all, through the drunkards and the sin, through the cigarettes and the stale sweat. I push

through it, discarding what I don't care for, searching for that sweet, grassy smell I've been hunting through the city. Oakwood and myrrh, smoothed down with something saccharine, something *obscene*. It's pulled me here, whether the source of it knows it or not, and I'm about to make it mine.

My eyes alight on a figure seated at the bar and suddenly every nerve is on fire.

Him. *Him*. *It has to be him.*

Oh, my sweet thing. You're coming home with me.

The creature looks at me with sullen, sunken eyes. Wariness tightens every feature.

He is so beautiful, so *wild.* Hunger floods my tongue. I cannot wait, I canno— I must.

I move closer to the man and look into his eyes. Deep ocean blue and a pain I cannot wait to taste. I lick a tongue over sharp, white teeth.

"Good evening." My voice is laced with soft, dangerous magic. It immobilises the man in place at the dining table, every limb frozen. Only his face is left able to move, heavy-lidded eyes tracking my movements around his chair and tongue darting out to moisten his lips. "Welcome to my home."

The man's voice is small and rounded with sleep, brushed raw with fear. "Who are you?"

"Oh, you beautiful creature." I place my hand on his shoulder, feeling the rough fabric of his coat under my fingertips, and trail a finger up the side of his neck. He is so *warm*, boiling under my cold, dead touch. My mouth waters uncontrollably. "My name is Hannibal."

"Hannibal…" The man rolls it around in his mouth like he's tasting every syllable. *Han-ni-bal*. Three little sounds made wicked by this creature's beautiful, perfect tongue. It's like the first time I've ever heard my own name. *Han-ni-bal*. I could listen to him serenade me like that for the rest of my long life.

"I already know your name, Mr Graham. I hope you don't mind that I rifled through your wallet." Will doesn't reply, and so I continue: "You're in my house. I'm going to take care of you."

"Care… of me?"

Pausing behind the creature, I rest my hands on his shoulders. "Yes." I lift a finger and drag my long, sharp nail across the tender skin of his forehead. He shudders under my touch as the metallic smell of his blood explodes in my nostrils. Red trickles down his temple and the hunger in my belly grows. I'm teasing myself. Playing with my food. But it's not often my dinners are this beautiful, not often that they spark something in me, not often that I want to

taste more than just their blood. And so I move round, watching his life leaking from where I cut him, and resist the urge to snap his neck and feast on his flesh. I want to savour this.

There's a bowl in front of the man and I pick it up, ladling a spoon into the steaming, pungent broth. I bring a spoonful to the man's parted lips; he drinks instinctively. I give him another spoonful. "What's… this?" he asks, voice slacking around the vowels.

"A rosemary and thyme infusion," I reply. "It's important for me that you're hydrated, and if I can season you a little, too, then that's even better."

"Season…?"

"Yes." My fangs ache. "I'm going to drink your blood, tonight, Mr Graham."

A long moment passes. I give him another spoonful, which he drinks obediently. I can see that some of my magic is lifting, that he's sharpening up a little around the edges. I can see the questions running behind his eyes and wait for him to choose one.

"This tastes terrible," he says eventually, and the corners of my mouth quirk up despite myself.

Not *What are you? What are you doing? What do you want from me?*

No, that would be too easy. This one wants to fight back.

Too bad I won't let him.

I refocus my magic, and those sharp edges soften again. Lifting the bowl once more, I continue to ladle broth into his mouth until the bowl is empty, and then place it back on the table. I swipe a finger over a stray droplet running over his bottom lip, then bring my head in closer to inhale the creature's scent. Pine needles and smoke. That dusky vertebrae smell, like when you crack the spine of an old book.

Oh, I can't wait any longer.

I carry Will Graham to my bed and lay him there gently, arranging him on the pillows so he's comfortable, then take a step back to observe my thrall splayed there for my pleasure. His cheeks are pinking, eyes glassy and hair tousled. *So, so beautiful.*

Shucking off my jacket and waistcoat, I roll up the sleeves of my fine white shirt and kneel on the bed, hovering over the man. I lean closer to him, drawing my hands up his chest and coming to rest under his chin. My sharp nails dig into the soft skin under his jaw as I turn his head to the right, exposing his throat to me. I bring my mouth to his neck. His scent is unbearably tantalising.

My incisors pierce the soft skin of his throat with a faint *popping* sound, and I begin to lap. He tastes just as good as he smells and euphoria starts to curl its way through my veins. My feet warm and my head is swimming a little. I pull back, running my tongue quickly over my bared teeth, sucking the blood into my mouth and swallowing, throat thick with it.

A slightly bitter aftertaste is the only thing marring this elixir. My voice is low and husky with gluttony. “You need to take better care of yourself. I can taste an emptiness in you.”

Will opens his mouth and forms words slowly, slurring through them. “Where am I?”

Bringing my mouth back down to his throat, I lick the escaping droplets of blood, pulling my wet tongue languidly all the way from the bottom of his neck, over the puncture wounds, over his soft, throbbing jugular and into the hollow of his jaw bone. My tongue snags on stubble and I skip over his beard, bringing my mouth to his cheek and pressing a soft kiss there, leaving a smear of blood. I kiss and kiss my bloodstained way along the skin of his cheek, up his temple, coming to rest in his soft, slightly curled dark locks. Inhaling deeply, I let his mossy, intoxicating scent flow through my body.

And then bring myself back down to drink.

I barely register the abhorrent physical pleasure which courses through my groin as I let the blood flow over my tongue. I care not for that experience which humans kill and maim for; I care only for gorging the demon inside of me with the power it craves. But still I can feel myself stiff and straining in my trousers and rub my crotch against the creature’s thigh absentmindedly, instinctively, trying in vain to release some pressure while continuing to lap and suckle at my thrall’s neck. I can’t help the physical pleasure that accompanies this act, just like he can’t help his own physical reactions to the ecstasy that’s coursing through his veins as I drink.

I can see his pants tenting and bring my hand to rub, hard, at his jeans. His hips buck uncontrollably into my touch and I can’t help but smile into his neck at the sight.

“Help me,” Will whispers.

“Don’t worry,” I reply. I can feel the blood smeared across my mouth, the throbbing in my trousers, the power coursing through my skin. Yes, this was the perfect choice. I arrange my mouth carefully around the pleasure filling my body with its heady perfume. “Just relax. This won’t hurt a bit.”

The urge to make good on that promise is strong behind my teeth. I’m binding our endings together, Will Graham and I, blurring the lines of our futures into one. This creature is mine now, all *mine*, mine to tend to and care for. I have to thank and worship him for the gift he’s giving me. I have to throw myself before his altar, or his sacrifice will have meant nothing.

I have to restrain myself.

I have to tear myself away from his neck, stop my supping lest I drain him dry; his skin is already paler, his movements growing sluggish. But my mouth is thick with cloying iron and the urge to devour is almost all-consuming. I unlatch with some difficulty. Pulling at the buttons of his fly, I reach my hand into his underwear as if on autopilot and wrap my fingers around his stiff length. The velvety skin is warm and soft beneath my fingertips. A small moan escapes the man’s mouth. The noise spurs me on, and I begin to move my fingers while I rest alongside him, my head swimming with the ecstasy of a feed.

Will twitches beneath my touch, his hips writhing slightly as I work his thick length. Away from his neck, away from his blood, I feel nauseous, and prop myself up as I continue to work him, eyes drawn to the two symmetrical puncture wounds near his jugular. My tongue feels dry, my body empty without him and before I know it I've crawled on top of the man, mouth moving straight back to his neck. He whimpers.

Everything within me is shivering. I feel his heartbeat in my mouth. The apologies I want to murmur into his skin are muffled by the blood filling my mouth like wine.

Growing drunker with indulgence by the second, I pull back, dizzy with pleasure so strong it's bordering on pain. I realise my chest is heaving, and drag my eyes over to the creature's face, my jaw hanging open and blood dripping from my chin to stain his shirt.

His face swims before me, and I bring my lips clumsily to his in a vicious mockery of a kiss, slippery with his blood.

I can't stop.

I reach my hand back down to him, and jerk him desperately as we kiss like fools, rutting my own hips against his thigh. Still clothed, the fabric of my trousers rubs sweet friction across my sensitive groin. Every nerve is screaming, every vein coated in the gilded pleasure of this sin, a whining growing in my ears as my movements grow faster. The pleasure is reaching a crescendo, a scrabbling in my thighs and belly; a soft, sad noise tumbles from the man beneath me as his hips, too, twitch, a slight thrusting into my grip. The movement sends lightning through my flesh.

My mouth lunges for his throat. I fill myself with his blood. It's so good I want to scream.

It's not my fault, I want to whisper into his wet, obscene mouth. *I'm not to blame.*

My caress is as soft as death as he finishes in my hand. At the feeling of the thick streams coating my fist, as his rich blood pours over my tongue, I too reach my own pleasure, my body on fire. I want to tear myself away, but my jaw only tightens and my tongue only scrapes as I draw every last drop from him, as I wring out his mind and drink every last cell. I can feel him shaking and fading away beneath me and something in my mind snaps. I feel a wetness flooding my underwear, thick spasms sparking through my crotch as I orgasm against his clothed thigh, gore smeared across my face.

The room is filled with the indecent smell of blood, sweat, and semen; we're both covered with it, the sickly metallic scent of rust and seawater clinging to us both.

As I regain some control over my shivering body, I pull back and realise I have gone too far, that I've torn this man asunder and scattered pieces of him to the winds. A terror floods my form as I take in his closed eyes, his trembling lower lip, as I hear the guttural heaving of his breath. There's something within me that balks at the idea of discarding this man's body like I normally would after a hunt. There's something primal within me filling my mind with only one thought: *Need*.

Shaking, I frantically lurch up and bring my wrist to my mouth; I bite, hard, drawing blood, and bring it immediately to his lips. His eyes are closed and I shove, shove my wrist against the dripping seam of his mouth. A droplet of my blood, rich with power, slides onto his tongue.

As I sit there, panting, hunched over the man, I can see my power starting to sink its claws in his soul. I know Becoming is fraught with pain. I can see it raging through his body, an uninvited guest. His eyes are closed and he's whimpering like a wounded animal, perspiration beading his brow. A flicker of empathy in my gut at that, a wholly unnatural feeling, one I quickly squash with a finer and more controlled sense of relief. Making noise is good: he's alive. Half of all vampires die the moment someone tries to turn them. If he makes it through the initial stage, I can guide him through the entire process.

He twitches beneath me. I'm in awe of what I've done, but I suppose this story was writing itself from the moment I scented him on the breeze.

He opens his eyes. They glow red in the soft light of the room.

"Hello," I whisper. Our eyes meet, and I feel the trembling anticipation of our future glimmering before us. "Welcome back, Will Graham."

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

A newly turned Will Graham struggles to come to terms with his new future. His Maker doesn't help matters.

bound in blood, the mongrel writhes

heady mist turned icy fog

twitching ears hear jarring notes

the smell of the world is drowned and dread

seek the fire, hunger, hunger

feral, outcast, rise again

bones unbroken, tremble, tremble

snarling lips are freezing over

bared white teeth and

gilded veins

When he eventually wakes, it takes Will Graham a long moment to work out where he is. He opens his eyes to bleary darkness, the room slowly shimmering into view around him. He's in an unfamiliar, but comfortable, bed, with sheets far more decadent than his. But he feels sick, and he doesn't know where he is, and— and there's someone sitting in a chair in the corner of the room.

His eyes sharpen up all at once, colour flooding his retinas along with memories of last night.

The man is full of sharp angles and disdain, his long, light hair swept over his shoulders. He's dressed in an expensive, dark-grey suit, one leg crossed over the other, watching him from across the room with dark, narrowed hawk eyes. He exudes a sense of control, a gravitas; Will knows exactly who he is without having to ask.

Mouth dry, limbs ungainly and crooked, Will pushes himself up in bed.

“What the fuck have you done to me?” His voice is rough and all too loud in the dark, silent room.

In contrast, the man’s voice is soft, accented and slightly exotic. “I’ve given you a rare gift.”

Flashes in his mind: blood, so much blood, power and ecstasy, this man’s mouth on his throat and his name on Will’s lips. Will draws a shaking hand to his neck, and there he feels two puncture wounds, a few centimetres apart. His belly feels as cold as ice. He’s afraid, extremely so. It tightens his guts. But Will is an old hat at fear. So he puts a lid on it, clutching his anger towards him instead. “What the fuck have you done to me?!” he repeats, voice shaking around the words.

The man stands and in an instance appears at the side of the bed, having crossed the six feet as if it was nothing, and Will leans back as the man bends over the bed, face an unnatural mask. “I said,” he spits, “that I’ve given you a rare gift. One I have shared with few. I don’t need to tell you what you are, Will Graham. What you’ve Become.” The man leans in a shade closer, so Will can feel his breath against his ear as he turns his head away. “You already know.”

Will’s voice is shaking now. “I have a family.”

Hannibal curls his lip. “Not anymore.”

Will lashes out, palms slamming into Hannibal’s shoulders with some force, knocking the vampire askew; but he recovers quickly and pounces upon Will, teeth bared. When Will struggles, fear lashing his spine as he jerks his wrists out of the creature’s hands, he’s surprised to find Hannibal falling away from him as he does so, and before he knows it Hannibal’s on the floor, gazing up at Will with a fury in his eyes. Will falls back on his ass and scrambles out of bed until he’s standing on unsteady feet, staring across the room at the vampire rising to his own feet before him.

“Nice trick.” Hannibal sneers at him from across the room. Will has no idea what he’s talking about. “You take to power nicely. You’re positively glowing, Will.”

Will’s hands are shaking. “How do I stop this?”

“You can’t.”

“I have to!”

“You *can’t*.”

“But—”

“No! You have no wife anymore. You have no child.”

Will’s mind feels blank, whirring with something he can’t put a finger on. “I have to go back.”

“You can’t go back, Will. You’re going to get hungry soon. Do you really want to be around your family when that happens?”

Will closes his eyes, pushing his hands over his face to press the heels of his palms against his eyes. Spots of light dance behind his eyelids. His body feels heavy, weighted with something. His teeth hurt. “I have to go.”

All of a sudden Hannibal is beside him again, close enough to touch. “What don’t you understand, Will? You can’t go back.”

For a second, Will pauses. He drags his hands off his face, and flicks his eyes up to glance at the man before him. Maybe he’s right—maybe he should stay here. Figure out what’s happened to him. Then he swallows, yanks his eyes away, and stumbles back. “Don’t fucking do that to me,” he snaps. “Whatever you’re doing, *stop*!”

Hannibal smiles a wicked smile, half formed and crooked on his face. Will can see his pointed teeth and balks, turning away, keeping his tongue firmly clamped down in his mouth so he doesn’t have to risk touching his own teeth. He doesn’t want to know what he’ll find. A wild terror in his gut battles the power he can feel writhing there, right next to a clawing desperate hunger pounding out a rhythm next to his heart: *Eat. Eat. Eat.*

He’s circling the plughole. He can’t do this. There’s so much here he *can’t do*.

Will runs. Hannibal doesn’t try to stop him.

I watch Will stumble out of my house in the dead of night, his eyes glowing bright amber with hunger and power. A gnawing sense of frustration flickers inside of me, but I tamp it down. I don’t have to be apart from him for long. It won’t be but a few days until the hunger drives him back towards me.

He’s going home. I know he’s going home. In a way, I can’t blame him; I did the same thing. In another way, the feeling of this man running from me is stoking a primal sense of anger, a dark urge to chase, to *claim*. Before I know it, I’m striding out of the house and taking to the skies, my dark wings ripping through the back of my suit and launching me into the air above Chicago. Cold wind ripples against my face as I squint into the clouds against the bright light of the moon.

There. *There*. I feel him, under my tastebuds; I still remember the feel of his silken blood on my tongue. *There*. Can the whole city feel him, running under their feet? Can the whole city scent his fear?

My mouth waters. I float through the sky, buffeting on the gusts. I’m not dressed for it, and the wind scratches at my eyes. But I can feel a tugging thread connecting my chest to Will moving through the city, and it pulls me through the buildings without much effort. Will is

moving quickly, quicker than he realises—a speed, agility, and stealth he never would have been able to sustain as a human. I can see the little creatures down there, looking around in confusion as a blur rushes past them, and I want to bare my teeth at them all for daring to look upon my thrall. *Mine*. *Mine*. *Mine*. The word beats a wicked drum in my head.

I crash to the floor, jogging a little as I reach what must be Will's house. *Mine*. *Mine*.

Then the word has morphed, materialised into a realisation in my mouth before I have a chance to stop it. I push it out of my mind, not wanting to acknowledge what's just rocked through my body, and pace in front of the house instead. It's a squat little thing, nothing like my own nest, and I can see him there on the porch, wobbling on unsteady feet as he pounds a fist against the door. I float up a little, wings holding me aloft, staring as he waits. I know that watching him open that door is the worst thing I could possibly do right now, the most powerful gas to throw on the fire of my wrath and jealousy, but I can't tear myself away.

That steady drum accents the beat of my wings: *Mine. Mine. Mine.*

Except now it's ruined with a slightly different note, a discordant thing twisting in my abdomen.

Mine. Mine. Mine.

Mate.

When Molly finally answers the door, Will can only stand there, staring at her while she stares at him, her mouth agape at his sweating, shivering form. He must look at a sight—he feels it, covered in blood, in the middle of the night, his shirt torn and face scratched. He knows he should go inside, but something is gluing his feet to the floor and so instead he just waits for her to say something to him.

"Oh my god, Will, are you alright?" Her voice is strained with fear. "Oh my god. Oh my fucking god, look at you. Where have you been? Come in, come in. Jesus."

Will stumbles through the door and into their living room, sinking down onto their familiar couch and taking his glasses off with a trembling hand. He can see they're filthy, covered in dust and splatters of blood. Molly flicks on a lamp and sits next to him, bringing out a hand to hover over his bicep; he flinches, not wanting her to touch him, and she draws her hands away quickly. Oh, Molly. She's always been patient like that.

"What happened?"

"I was… I was mugged. I don't know what happened. I woke up somewhere." Half a truth, half a lie, Will treads that tightrope. The omissions are thick on his tongue. He pulls up the collar of his shirt, conscious of the marks on his neck. He can feel Molly's eyes on him and

closes his own eyes, putting his head in his hands. He can feel her questions, she's brimming with them, she's been worried sick. He can smell her fear; her scent floods his nostrils. It's her, it's Molly, the same comforting, vanilla smell, but so much more intense than normal, layered with new facets, with emotions. And the subtle tang of sweat, of *blood*. His stomach growls, his mouth waters— No, *no*.

He stands, restless, puts his glasses back on and moves over to the dining table, pulling out his wallet and keys from his pocket on reflex. Tugging his glasses back off, he starts frantically wiping at the blood with the tail of his shirt, and then, realising it's a fruitless endeavour, starts unbuttoning his shirt with shaking hands.

He's so fucking hungry.

He realises Molly has come to stand near to him.

"You had your keys? Why did you knock?"

"I dunno, Molly, I guess I forgot."

"You've got your wallet, your phone? What did they take?"

"For fuck's sake, Molly, I don't know! I was busy being mugged!" She flinches back, hurt, and he immediately feels that twinge of regret strike through him. His hands are freezing and his body feels like it's on fire all at once. "I'm sorry. Look, I'm going to shower."

"I think you need to go to hospital. Or the police."

He jerks his head from side to side. "No. I'm going to take a fucking shower."

The water rushes over his skin and Will stands there, feeling nothing but the stab of hunger in his gut. He wants to throw up, but resists, tilting his head up into the hot steam instead. The blood melts off his skin, pooling in scarlet ribbons around his feet, and he watches it circle the drain and be washed away. A bad dream, he tells himself. It was a bad dream. Rinse it off, and you'll be okay. Adapt. You can work this out.

If only he could fill the ache in his belly with this stack of lies.

I can see Will through the window, wrapping a towel around his waist. Water beads on his tanned, muscled arms and chest and my mouth waters. He's thrumming with a power so thick I can taste it. Stomach lurching, empty and wanting as I watch him, I swallow, and in one swift movement beat my wings and launch into the air. I am not going to debase myself by watching this man all night, even if the tug under my skin demands I keep an eye on my m— *no*.

No, no, no.

To home, then. Will won't be able to stay away for long. Soon the hunger will overcome him.

I can wait for that. Luckily for Will, I'm a patient man.

Chapter 3

bound in blood, the falcon shudders

blind and lost it gives a cry

flying into empty silence

prisoner of instincts honed

dive, and sunder, so familiar

claws and wingbeats, bringing death

an unknown fate, an unknown target

mete out eyeless judgement, spirit

seeking those with

gilded veins

Flash. Open your eyes.

Your mouth won't stop watering. Your feet are moving of their own accord. Your stomach has never been this empty. And the house is full of blood, of meat; it lies next to you, it's down the hall. Your fingers tremble with anticipation, with want and need; you can't stop yourself from wanting to reach out and take what's yours by right.

Oh, you're so fucking hungry.

He's been staring at the white, bare patch of skin under the nape of Molly's neck for what could be hours. He watches the rise and fall of her soft breaths and clenches his fingers into fists under the sheets. He will not touch her.

Will's standing over Walter's bed. No, he's not, he's in the bathroom. He's screaming at the empty mirror.

Feed.

No, you can't sleep. Your dreams are full of twisting, crawling little things, scrambling on top of each other; your dreams are full of someone else's icy grip, of someone's mouth on your neck.

The next morning, Will sits on the edge of his bed, dark circles lining his eyes. Molly is up and out of the house with Walter, not wanting to spend another second around him, and he can't blame her. He feels as if he's oozing a dark malevolence, a curse, and would rather she was nowhere around him right now. He is so, so hungry. He's never been as famished. He makes eggs and bacon, and lets it drop off his fork. It turns to ash in his mouth.

He pulls the curtains closed and curls up on the sofa, pulling a cushion to his chest. He closes his eyes, because he doesn't want to think about how he can see the room much better than he normally would be able to in the dark. He doesn't want to think about that at all.

You're standing over Walter's bed. Your mouth is watering. You can smell his blood.

You're screaming into the tiger's mouth. You're weeping in the dark.

He closes his eyes, and when he wakes up, he has no idea how much time has passed. He listens, and hears nothing but the rumble of cars going by outside, the sound of a bird in the distance. He cannot feel any heartbeats in this house.

Eyes closed. Breathe in, breathe out.

You wake with a blanket over you. It stinks of *human*. It turns your stomach.

No, no, it smells like your wife, like your home. *Fuck*.

He feels weak, shaky. The hunger in his belly threatens to overcome him. Sit up. Breathe. Get some water. He's in the kitchen. He's in the living room. He's in the bathroom. Sit down. Get some water. *Breathe*.

It's night, now. Your family are home. They've left you on the sofa.

They're scared of you.

No, no. They're not.

And you're so… hungry.

Kill them.

Another dream. Or is it? He wakes in bed this time, shivering. Where's Molly? She's not by you. She's not in the same bed. Get up. Fuck, it's so cold. *Get up*.

You're empty. You're dying. No, you're invincible. Ancient power courses through your veins.

You blink and you're in his room again.

He's so small in the bed. He's curled up under the layers of blankets. Glow-in-the-dark stars coat the ceiling. Your pupils dilate, taking in more of his sleeping form. The soft dark curls brushing over the pillow. The smell of *blood*. Your hand is on his arm, your mouth lunging to his neck, and for a split second you think you're really going to do it, aren't you, you monster, you can practically taste the boy's flesh melting like butter in your mouth— *NO*!

Something pulls Will back at the last second, some desperate remnant of his humanity. Tears prick his eyes as he scrabbles his hands over his face and stumbles out of the room. He's aching with hunger.

It's dark now. He's gotta leave.

You've got to eat.

But where can he go?

Will's only a few feet out of his front door when he's brought to a halt. A blanket of stars stretches high above him, the moon waning into a fat little circle behind some wisps of cloud. Around every light, every star and every streetlamp, glows a halo. The night looks so beautiful, limned in a thrumming haze, everything gleaming by the light of the moon. A curious scent assaults his nostrils, a pepper and citrus note that brings back jagged memories from a few nights ago. He turns his head and resists the urge to *snarl* at the sight of the man before him. "What are you doing here?"

Hannibal's lip curls. "I heard you."

"Heard me?"

"I heard you crying out in the night. So *hungry*." His tone is taunting, and it raises Will's metaphorical hackles. "A mewling, desperate thing."

Will frowns. Hannibal had been nowhere near him since the other day, he was sure of that, and either way, he hadn't been *mewling*. "Can all vampires hear as well as you do?"

"No." Hannibal looks up at the sky, smoothing down the front of his jacket with a long-fingered hand. "Not all of them. It requires a special… bond."

The emptiness in Will's stomach is so loud. He shakes off Hannibal's words. "I don't want to see you, if I'm being entirely honest."

"I think you need my help, Will Graham."

Will barks out a short laugh. "I don't need *your* help."

"You're hungry, aren't you?"

So, so hungry. Will could fall to his knees and beg this man for just one morsel. "I'll be fine."

"You need help. I can help you. *Tell me what happened*."

Will is speaking before he realises it. "I got so hungry. So fucking hungry. I woke up in Walter's room, standing over his bed. I wanted to… I wanted to drain him dry."

Hannibal's eyes glint in the moonlight. "Did you?"

"No!"

"A shame." Hannibal licks a tongue over his pointed incisors and catches Will's eyes. "The young can be so delicious."

An anger rises in Will, and he welcomes the frustration and rage, using it to paint over the aching in his belly. He steps towards Hannibal, lurching forward in his new, overly strong body, still not used to it yet, and reaches out a hand. "Don't you fucking talk about him." He can feel his lips lifting over his teeth as he speaks. He's leering close to Hannibal, and from here can see the white of his smiling teeth, the blood-red eyes, the pale skin. He remembers its cold touch and shivers, turning away, dropping his hand. "I would *never* hurt them."

"Your discipline impresses me."

Will's vision is swimming. He takes a step away from Hannibal, then balks as he looks up to find the vampire standing directly in front of him. "Please, leave me alone."

"No. You're hungry, aren't you?" Will doesn't have to answer; his silence is reply enough. Hannibal's voice is dripping with barely contained glee. "Come with me. We can feed together."

"No," Will says, voice rasping. He can feel its halfheartedness, but also knows that he's holding onto the last shred of his humanity with gnarled, wilting fingers. His whole world has flipped upside down and he doesn't know if he can handle admitting that to himself just yet. "I can't."

Hannibal has no patience for him, he can tell. "Fine. You know where I am, Will, whether you realise it or not. Come find me when the hunger gets too much."

And with that, Hannibal launches himself up in the air. Will grits his teeth so his mouth doesn't drop open as he watches Hannibal float above him. Hannibal gives him one last withering look and leaves. He stares at the space which Hannibal had just occupied for some time, feeling the hunger in his gut as if it were a hole in his very soul.

I return home seething. The rejection stings harsher than any cut.

I hunt, claws slashing out before me. The taste is bitter in comparison to my last meal, and my wings itch underneath my shoulder blades with the urge to splay them open and return to Will. I can feel his anger, his fear and hunger. I watch from the rooftops, wiping the blood from my hands, as he stumbles around the city. My eyes pierce the night, finding Will wherever I look; my body follows him without my mind even processing it.

A night and a day pass. I sleep fitfully, the current of fear prickling under my skin disconcerting in more ways than one. I resist going out again. I know I have to stay where I am, despite my being crying out to find Will in the night once more.

That evening, I hear a knocking at my door. When I open it, there he is. My angel in the lamplight.

I smile, a wicked grin for this wicked soul. “Will. Please, come in.”

Will eyes the creature with a wariness that is not strong enough to overcome the raw emptiness in his stomach. He feels weak, lightheaded, and in a last desperate attempt to take himself out of the way of any innocents, follows that tugging thread he’s felt unfurling from his heart since the other night to this door, to this man. No, not a man.

He still can’t say the word in his own head. It clangs around, all wrong, whenever he thinks it. It’s absurd.But Will Graham is nothing if not practical and he can’t deny several key facts. He knows what he has to do.

“Hello,” he replies, stepping into the vampire’s home. As he walks in, he feels his mouth go dry because he can feel himself crossing not just this physical threshold, but a mental and emotional barrier that’s going to stop him going back to his old life; it’s like he’s admitting something obscene as he walks into this man’s home, like he’s falling to his knees in confession. The place is ornate, impeccably decorated and furnished in dark colours and expensive accessories; Will feels the wealth dripping down the walls, and turns to take in the man before him. He’s dressed in another fine suit, this one dark navy with silver pinstripes. His long hair is braided loosely down his back, and his eyes—his dark maroon eyes—are locked on Will’s glowing amber ones. Will swallows. “I’m back.”

“I can see that,” Hannibal says, smiling. “Stumbling around the city at night didn’t lead you where you wanted to go after all?”

Will struggles to know what to reply. He can tell he’s being played with, can tell this coyness is an act, that Hannibal’s trying to play some sort of game with him, but he’s too tired to engage. “I’m hungry,” he says instead, voice rasping out of him.

Hannibal just smiles wider in return. His sharp, white teeth glint in the warm lighting of his reception room. “Then let’s eat.”

Chapter 4

bound in blood, the forest sways

the roots they pulse in sisters' time

glade and chine, copse and barrow

reach hands up to grasp the sky

weave together living fabric

cast the net and watch them come

caught unknowing, generations

growing old in prisons young

with wounds of sap and

gilded veins

We hunt together, and I revel in his beauty.

Time passes quickly over the next few weeks. Will's a fast learner, eyes wide and taking everything in. He has a natural gift for savagery. He's strong and relishes using his hands. As he stands over his prey, blood dripping off his chin, I realise that every cell in my body is crying out to press my mouth to his, to taste the ambrosia giving him all his power. He is so beautiful in the moonlight, blood black on his hands. I want to take him, I want him to take me. I want him to call out my name as his *Mate*.

But I resist. Before all that, I want to watch him. I want to teach him and see what he has to teach me. There will be time enough for all I want to share with Will Graham; I've made sure of it.

It's hard for Will to get used to his new body. He's aware of everything, every noise amplified, and the smells of the crowds around him as they walk the city at night are overwhelming. And he can't get used to the way Hannibal talks about them as if they're fine vintages in his cellar. Hannibal is an expert killer, tracking his prey and taking them out in seconds, sinking his teeth into their necks and rending flesh as if it were soft bread. He relishes in every kill, blood dripping down his chin, eyes glowing bright red in the dark, and

Will watches, battling his revulsion and his desire until the desire wins out and he drops to his knees to share in the bounty that Hannibal is giving him. To drink is euphoric, power coursing through his veins, like nothing he's ever felt. The wild pleasure is deeply addictive.

They lure others back to Hannibal's home, and Will practices taking them out himself. He leaps onto a man's back and tears at his jugular, clumsily, Hannibal throwing out instructions towards him as he does so. He seduces a woman, and as he trails his hand up her blouse, towards her neck, as she moans beneath him, suddenly his hand turns to claws and he stabs her in her heart and lets the blood flow over his tongue.

He is sick, sometimes, in the mornings. He cries, once, as the grief of losing his old life overwhelms him.

But the high of the kill is stronger than anything and the pull towards Hannibal is something he can't resist. His body cries out to touch him, to clutch him and paint his skin in the blood of their hunting, and one evening, after a particularly frenzied hunt, Will finds himself pressing his mouth to Hannibal's with a sick fervour, hungry to taste him. He takes him right there, on the sofa, as their prey slowly fades away on the floor. Will averts his eyes from that, focusing on nothing but the feel of Hannibal below him, the flesh under his fingertips, the lips sliding against his. He could die, here, taking his pleasure from this man, licking a bloodstained tongue over pointed teeth, and he'd die happy, licking his way up Hannibal's neck, groaning into his skin. Pleasure fills every cell of his body until he thinks he's going to explode from it. Nothing has ever felt so deliciously *sinful*.

"Have you ever Made anyone else?" he asks, one morning, as they lie together in Hannibal's bed.

"No," Hannibal replies, voice soft and laced with sleep. "There was one who asked me. But he wasn't worthy. I sent him away."

Will wonders what happened to that man. Hannibal falls asleep beside him, but Will lies awake for hours, watching the singular spot of light that has managed to sneak through Hannibal's thick blackout curtains move across the ceiling. He feels a sense of something inside him imploding as he grows closer to this man, to this life. The lack of control frightens him.

Learn. Adapt. Survive.

He thinks of Molly and Walter, and closes his eyes. They're safe as long as he stays here.

They're talking late one night, having just come home from a hunt, dried blood still sticky under their fingernails. Hannibal's talking to him about how to handle their kills. Will knows the basics: be discreet, clean up, no one someone would miss too much. But now Hannibal is getting into specifics, and Will is listening while he swirls his whiskey around in his glass.

Lucky for him, Hannibal is as loose with his liquor cabinet as he is with his tongue. "…You have to honour the blood, Will. My Maker taught me that."

Will looks up, takes in Hannibal's svelte form, at the firelight painting the planes of his face in warm, molten gold. He sips red wine from a glass and stares back at Will, unnerving him. "Who did Make you? You've never told me that."

Hannibal is quiet for a bit, which unnerves Will further. He can see him considering, the fire flickering in his dark eyes. Then he begins to speak, voice seeming to come from far away as he dredges up the past. "For some time when I was younger, I lectured in Paris. There I caught the eye of a young student. He was…" At this point, Hannibal trails off. Will looks over at him, too quickly, for he has rarely heard him falter and the sound is jarring to him. "He was vain. Angry, disdainful, arrogant. But… captivating. Beautiful." Hannibal looks entirely wistful, and Will feels a sudden surge of something acrid in his gut. A feral anger, something clawing in his limbs, and his fingers stiffen around his glass as he resists the urge to stand up and stride over to Hannibal, to plant his teeth against his neck and remind him that he's *mine*. The sudden feeling shocks Will, and he has to struggle back to the present, tuning back into Hannibal's voice. "…It was passionate. When it came to its natural end, I thought I wanted to kill him. But when I went to his rooms, he was ready for me. He was faster, stronger—a vampire."Hannibal looks up, finally, to catch Will's eyes, and Will blinks, looks away. "I think my boldness amused him. I think my tenacity made him inclined to Make me instead of tearing me apart. I had been through so much, had already killed many people, but in many ways that was my true Becoming."

The story sits heavy in Will's gut. He is reminded of an uncomfortable fact: this man is a killer, in more ways than one. He's a killer now, an apex predator. And he was a killer before he had an excuse.

This man is a *monster*.

Hannibal's library is vast, floor to ceiling bookshelves lining the walls. With its warm recessed lighting and lamps scattered about, curtains artfully arranged over the windows to keep out unwanted light, it's Will's favourite place to retreat when he needs a quiet moment. Hannibal is often out in the evenings, attending social events, the theatre or opera, or, and Will can only guess at this, because he has never seen Hannibal come back from an evening looking nothing but immaculate, hunting. The only evidence that Will has ever seen of these hunts is the fridge, stocked with unmistakably human meat, or the meals that Hannibal serves Will. The first time this happened, Will had frowned at his plate. "You eat?"

"We can eat, yes. It's not necessary, but it can be a pleasure. Though things may taste different to you, and some of your tastes may have changed. You might like things you never used to, or vice versa."

"…Human?"

Hannibal smiled at him, fangs glinting in the soft candlelight of the dining room. “I promise it’s the best-tasting meat of them all. Nothing compares to the delight of a fresh kill, but it’s near enough. Some believe that eating human meat when it’s not fresh will harm us, but I say that they haven’t unlocked its power.” At this, his smile stretched even wider and Will’s stomach began to turn as his eyes tracked the blood slowly oozing from the pan-seared cut of meat before him, nestled on a bed of salad leaves.

But his stomach was rumbling and he was so *hungry*. The fork had been heavy in his hand, but the metallic salve melting over his tongue soon edged any disgust away.

Now, eyes running over one shelf of Hannibal’s books, Will grips his whiskey glass a little tighter and tries to push those thoughts back inside himself. He had done worse than eat human flesh these past few weeks. He’s killed, he’s drunk from people.

The burn of whiskey against his throat is soothing. It always has been.

He spies an interesting woodcut and pauses to take it in. It depicts a man, slumped over the table, with a woman draped over him. It has a distinct air of melancholy and regret. He could almost feel himself as the man, tired and drained, a life-sucking creature heavy on his own back.

He stares at this woodcut before some little niggle in his brain alerts him that he’s not alone. “Hello, Hannibal.”

“You’re getting better at sensing me. I can hardly creep up on you anymore.” Will can tell that Hannibal’s voice is peppered with amusement, with something that Will can only describe as *affection*. He smiles, despite himself, and turns around. Hannibal seems to glow in front of him, looming larger than life, dressed impeccably as always. “You need to be careful on the whiskey now, Will. You metabolise it differently.”

Will feels the smile coming to his face, warm from his belly. “I’m used to it.” At Hannibal’s silence, Will turns back to the woodcut, which pulses black and white in front of him. The figures seem to be emerging from the wood itself. “Where did we come from?”

Hannibal moves to stand beside him and Will is conscious of their arms brushing together. A primal urge begins to grow inside his body, and he shifts on his feet at the sudden intrusion. These have become familiar, and he resists them every time. *Down, boy*. Will tunes into Hannibal’s voice instead. “No one really knows. Stories about us originated in Eastern Europe, of course, but it was a while until they became true. People used to liken us to more like ghosts, and then as something like zombies.”

Will wants to laugh at the image of Hannibal stumbling around like something from the movies. It couldn’t be farther from the truth. “Where do you think we came from?”

Hannibal turns slightly towards Will, edging ever closer. Will’s breath catches in his throat. Hannibal’s next words are soft, barely a purr escaping his lips. “I think God curses himself for accidentally making the Devil stronger than a man.”

A shiver runs its long, cold finger up Will's spine. Of course he would say that. Suddenly the warmth of the whiskey is gone, and all he can see are the two macabre figures in the woodcut, swimming before his eyes. But Hannibal doesn't seem to notice, and steps forward, bringing his mouth to Will's. Cool lips kiss him deeply, Hannibal's tongue flicking briefly into Will's mouth before the man steps back. Will keeps his eyes closed for a few seconds, the floating image of the man in the woodcut imprinted on the backs of his eyelids. When he finally opens his eyes, Will turns away from it all, heading back to his room. Not tonight. He can't do this tonight.

The few months that pass with Will are some of the happiest of my life. To have him here, my Mate, completing me, is all I never realised I needed. He's beautiful, strong, a natural to this life. He doesn't realise the depth of the bond that stretches between us, and I don't explain it to him. But I relish the fact that he's mine, all *mine*.

We hunt, we feed, we retire to my house, we talk. Will is endlessly fascinating, like no man I've ever met. He's a curious soul, asking questions about every aspect of vampire life. I answer honestly where it suits me, and lie where it suits me more; despite the smoothness of every falsehood, I can tell he picks up on some of them, which impresses me. I smile at him, and he—slowly—begins to occasionally smile back.

We share wine and prey and heavy touches in the small hours of the morning. It takes every ounce of control, every time, not to whimper and beg him to take every part of me, or to claw my fill from him.

I begin to wonder how I ever lived without him.

Then I notice him becoming sullen, withdrawn. He pushes away my touch. He hesitates before the killing blows. I want to probe his mind, but I'm fearful of what I'll find there. But I feel his worry, his hesitations, as if they were my very own hands quavering. The ground feels shaky beneath us, and I resent that. One night, as we sit in my library before the fire, I ask him: "What's on your mind, Will?"

"Nothing," he replies, slow and hollow. "Sorry. I'm fine."

"You can't lie to me."

A long pause. "Do you ever wish things were different?"

"No," I reply, immediately. "There's no use dwelling on what might have been."

Will looks into his whiskey glass, and takes a deep breath. I feel a panicky sensation start to spread through my gut, and quickly squash it down. No use for that.

“I can’t be here. I can’t do this, with you. I’m not a killer, Hannibal.”

“Yes you are, Will, whether you like it or not.” My words fall harsher than I mean to, rubbed raw with the possibility of losing him. I attempt to soften my tone. “It can be a difficult adjustment. But you’re doing so well.”

Will lets out a dark, short laugh. “Well?” He snorts, and I let the silence lengthen. “I don’t think I’m doing well.”

“You are. I promise.”

He doesn’t reply. Mouth dry, I watch him for some time, observing the firelight reflecting in his amber eyes as he stares into the flames. I feel hollow.

When I wake, he is gone.

When day breaks, he still isn’t back.

The realisation comes crashing over me like a wave. Once again he’s left me.

The loss of Will is greater than every feeling I’ve ever felt. I have never been more aware that although I am night incarnate, I am also just a vessel of flesh, empty and wanting. My kills grow more savage, more elaborate, more desperate, more dangerous. I hunt too often in Baltimore, rather than spreading my kills as I have been doing for many years.

I hunt, but soullessly. I read, but my eyes are closed. Time passes, the slow second hand ticking over as I wait for my Mate to return.

Kneeling on the floor of a church, I twist and bend the corpse of a man in my hands, blood spraying over my shirt, my sharp cat eyes picking out details in the dim lighting. A heart for my Valentine. The message is clear:

Will, come back to me.

I need you.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

a little spice for you this time as well as a cameo for IWTV enjoyers! thank you to everyone who's been following along, hope you like this update!

bound in blood the vixen wavers

half formed thoughts at half formed sounds

moonlight bathes its furtive footsteps

pulled by instinct, pushed by fear

feel the flicker: ground will tremor

up the spine through heart and brain

certain terror, known to no-one

generations hard won claim

electric nerves and

gilded veins

In the pale early morning light, Will stands over the grimy kitchen sink, holding the empty bottle of whiskey over his mouth, willing one last drop from it. After a tortuous second, the bead of amber liquid hanging from the bottle's mouth finally splashes on his tongue. It has the taste of a grim, bitter finality. Resigned, the bottle hits the counter with a dull thunk. It's not enough. It's never enough.

His belly rumbles; he hasn't had a proper feed in almost six months, and he can feel it. Hannibal had told him before that they could survive on animal blood if necessary, but that it was like a human subsisting on nothing but paltry amounts of bread and no other sustenance. For the last few months, Will's diet had consisted of rats, birds, and copious amounts of whiskey, and he sure felt the effects of such a limited diet.

But hunger is grounding. It's a necessary evil, a poignant reminder of the shreds humanity that he's desperately trying to hold onto. He can't be a killer. He's spent his entire life hunting those who murder and he's not about to become what he's always hated.

With not much to do, Will takes to wandering the streets of Baltimore at night, safe and content in the power thrumming under his skin, melting into the shadows and closing his eyes any time he passes by another soul, lest he inhale the sweet human scents and let his hunger consume him. He often goes to his old house. Warm light spills out from several windows, pulsing in the cool night air. He keeps coming back here, for some reason. He knows he can't go in, but he wants to. Will licks his lips. He can sense two heartbeats inside that house and he wants to feel them in his mouth.

Time to hunt. More rats, voles, birds. A meagre existence.

Sometimes, he finds himself on Hannibal's street without consciously having walked there. It's like his feet just want to guide him back there, but his stomach flips every time he realises where he is. It's during one of these moments that, from his vantage point across the road, he notices movement in front of Hannibal's house. There's a tall figure, slipping inelegantly through the shadows, peering into Hannibal's windows. With his new eyes, Will can pick out the details of his clothes, can see his broad fingers flexing in their gloves, but he can't make out any details of the man's face, obscured under a cap and hooded jacket.

Will watches this stranger curiously for several minutes. It's the early hours of the morning and there aren't normally people roaming around at this time. Not living *humans;* Will can scent the blood pumping through his veins. The man paces in front of Hannibal's house a few times, then spends several minutes examining the building. He looks up at the moon, a twinkling crescent hanging off the night sky, and then leaves. Will watches him go.

The theatre is packed with crowds mingling before the start of tonight's show. A glass of subpar champagne in hand, I'm only half listening to an acquaintance sharing his opinion on what to expect from tonight's performance. I'm not alone: beside me stands a tall, handsome vampire with long, golden hair curling over the shoulders of his finely cut suit. He smiles, and his teeth glint in the warm lighting of the lobby; the man we're talking to falters as

Lestat's magic washes over him, causing time to contract and slow around us. "Boring, isn't he?"

I go to chuckle, but quickly stifle the laughter as I sense the arrival of someone I've been waiting so long to see. I can scarcely believe it as his scent hits my nostrils: salt, pine trees, the smoky amber of a whiskey barrel. Something inside me alights, a flame I've been struggling to keep extinguished. *Mate*. I struggle to keep my voice even. "Long time no see, Will."

"It's only been a few months."

A day is too long to go without you. I curse every person who lays their eyes upon you when I cannot. I curse the rain for touching you when my hands are bound.

I turn, and take him in. He's thin, beard thick on his jaw, dark curls falling into his sunken eyes as he stands there, staring at me. I have to stifle a small sound at the intensity of the protectiveness that washes over me. I want to take him home, feed and clean him, I want to put my mouth to his and whisper that I'll never let him leave me again if it kills me. But I can't say all that, and set my jaw to baffled indifference. My voice is icy and doesn't betray my thoughts. "Six months, just about."

Will glances between me and Lestat, his face souring as my companion pushes closer to me, draping an arm around my shoulder. I want to shrug it off, but the urge to see how Will reacts is stronger. "Look, I only came to give you a warning," he says. "Someone's following you."

"And how have you come by this information?" My companion shifts on his feet beside me, and I can sense the smirk playing around his face from here. I want to shiver as I feel Will's seething anger wash through the suspended in moment in time Lestat has created for us.

"That's all I wanted to say."

"How did you find me?"

Will flashes his teeth. "I *smelled* you. With… him."

Finally, Lestat speaks. I know he can't hold himself back any longer. "Look at this pretty young thing, Hannibal. Already so finely… attuned." The last syllable is flat, and I know exactly what he's referring to. Will's jaw twitches, a slight movement that doesn't escape the notice of my trained eye. "It's been a long time since I've felt a bond like this, *mon chéri*. Should I be jealous?"

The French endearment and taunting question sliding off Lestat's tongue, smooth as silk, only serve to thicken the tension as it mounts in the suspended moment. The phrase is a tacit challenge, a gauntlet thrown at Will's feet. I can feel my companion poised to strike before me, and by the stiffening of Will's limbs, I know that he'll strike back twice as hard. A possessiveness grows in me, an urge to protect, to *claim.*

Anger fills my body suddenly, clear as a lightning bolt over the sea. I step forward, but it's too late; Will has already turned and walked away. Lestat lets the moment go, and quickly the

room is filled once again with the sound of voices and chatter. After a moment where I battle with myself over whether to follow, fingers tugging on my elbow pull me back, and amidst the feeling of curious eyes on my skin I turn to melt back into the crowd.

The show is disappointing and the company soured by Will's appearance. Lestat quickly finds other ways to entertain himself, and slips off into the night in search of a suitable post-show meal before the play even finishes. I fly myself home, brooding on the events of the evening, but my heart begins to quicken as I approach my home, surprised to see what waits on my doorstep.

Will looks up from where he's lounging as Hannibal approaches. He remains steady, despite the pounding of his pulse in his wrists as he takes in Hannibal's winged form coming up to him. He's beautiful like this, in the moonlight and all his glory. He comes to a stop in front of Will, who's sitting on the doorstep, legs out in front of him. "You needn't have waited here. You know you're welcome to share my home."

A casual lift of one shoulder. "I didn't want to presume."

"Shall we talk inside?"

Hannibal holds out a hand to Will, who eyes it for a brief moment before standing without taking it, clambering up from the step. The movement brings him close to Hannibal, and that brief brush of contact, that tiny moment of inhalation of Hannibal's scent, is all it takes for the dam of Will's desire to break, flooding his body with the need to touch. His hand grabs Hannibal's upper arm and he squeezes; Hannibal moves closer, pressing his body against Will's, and they tumble through the door, barely passing the threshold before Will pushes Hannibal against the wall, his wings still splayed behind him. Will brings a firm hand to Hannibal's chest and pushes, and a noise escapes Hannibal's lips as his wings are slightly crushed into the wall. "Careful," he hisses. "They're sensitive."

"Then behave," Will replies, voice hoarse. Hannibal stills at the flicker of command entering his voice, a dog under Will's thumb. "Tell me what the fuck he was talking about."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't play with me."

Hannibal moistens his lips with his tongue. "Our bond. Between Maker and Made."

"What does it mean?"

"It means that we're… connected. By a bridge. You can cross it, with training, and we can share thoughts, feelings. We can make each other… stronger."

Will steps back. “But he said something else. That he hadn’t seen it before. What did he mean?”

“I think our bond is stronger than the typical bond you might find.”

“In what way?”

“I don’t know.”

Will pauses and stares at him. It feels like a lie, but Will has a million questions he wants to ask Hannibal, and can’t be bothered with the cat and mouse games. “Who the fuck was that, anyway?”

“The man who Made me.”

A wry sneer curls across Will’s lips. “I see.” Will can feel his jealousy, thick and acrid in his gut. Eyes flashing, Will paces forward a step, then stops. His eyes are burning, accusatory. “He knows you?”

“He knows some of me.”

Another step forward, and Will’s next words brush against Hannibal’s cheek. “Does he know all of you?”

Hannibal keeps his voice steady, despite the shiver running over his spine and into his wings. “Not like you do.”

A purr of contentment rolls through Will’s body as he takes in Hannibal’s words. His lips gently brush against Hannibal’s sharp jawline. He inhales Hannibal’s rich, round scent, like a punnet of blackberries spilling over the floor, a twist of cinnamon in the air, the sweetness of freshly cut pine trees. He kisses the smooth, pale skin of Hannibal’s cheek, and feels the man draw in a sharp inhale below him. “Someone’s been watching you.”

“Have they?”

“Yes.”

“Someone apart from you?”

Hannibal’s breathing is shallow, Will still poised taut over his body, mouth hovering near his neck. “…Yes,” Will whispers. With a slight movement, Hannibal tilts his head towards Will, and their mouths come together, the softness of the kiss betraying the anger that Will can still feel pulsing in his gut. Will trembles at the feel of Hannibal’s lips in his again, his taste; his mind turns back to seeing Hannibal side by side with another man, another vampire, and at the sudden burst of jealousy that flashes through him, he bites down on Hannibal’s lip, drawing blood. It doesn’t taste like ecstasy, like the human blood does; no, this tastes like *home* spilling across his tongue.

Hannibal hums a little noise into his mouth and Will becomes quickly aware of how painfully erect he is. “You haven’t been looking after yourself,” Hannibal hisses against the wet seam

of his mouth.

“No,” Will replies roughly, bringing a hand to loosen Hannibal’s tie with a swift tug. “Why would I?”

Hannibal’s nimble fingers make quick work of Will’s button-down, and Will shrugs out of it even as he captures Hannibal’s mouth in his again, pushing him against the wall. Hannibal braces against Will with two palms to his chest, and Will steps back a little, breaking the kiss. He watches as Hannibal unbuttons his shirt, greedily drinking up Hannibal’s glossy mouth and pinked cheeks. He knows he must look in even worse of a state, he hasn’t showered in days, he’s unshaven and unkempt; everything Hannibal hates. But he doesn’t look like he hates it now, his eyes narrowed and hair mussed up, his broad leathery wings still splayed out behind him. Impulsively, as Hannibal begins to fiddle with the fly of his dress pants, Will brings a finger to stroke against a wing. It’s soft, a rich velvet against the pad of his index finger. Hannibal shivers, reflexively flinching a little away from Will. “Do you want me to put them away?” he breathes.

“No,” Will replies. His gaze trails up the scalloped edge of the wing, following the soft, dark skin up the wall. “They’re beautiful.”

“They’re *sensitive*.”

Will glances down and smiles a little. “I can tell,” he replies, stroking another little line along Hannibal’s wing. “Keep going.”

Hannibal continues to undo his fly, watching Will carefully. He lets the pants hang open, and Will takes the bait, leaning forward to kiss Hannibal again while slipping his hand into Hannibal’s underwear. He takes the stiff length in his hand, the skin of Hannibal’s cock as soft as the skin of the wing. As he rubs his thumb over the head, smearing the copious amounts of pre-cum there, he strokes Hannibal’s wing again, relishing in the way he twitches and bucks into his hand. Hannibal tugs his trousers down, and there Will pins him against the wall, pushing his body weight so that Hannibal has to relax against the wall with his pants tangled around his thighs, arching his wings up straight so they don’t get crushed as Will strokes him. Will pushes his mouth against Hannibal’s again, sucking greedily at the man’s lips. Sliding his tongue into Hannibal’s mouth, he loses himself in it, the feel of Hannibal hard against his hand, his own cock thick and throbbing in his pants. There’s nothing like this, there’s nothing like home, this feels so right, *his*, *mine*: the thoughts won’t stop circling as he kisses Hannibal harshly, the urge to consume almost overwhelming. He’s jerking Hannibal fast, now, his fist making a *thwap-thwap-thwap* as it pulls and slaps against Hannibal’s groin, the other man writhing and panting below him. The smell of sex in the air is obscene.

Will pulls back, moving his mouth to suckle at Hannibal’s neck, resisting the urge to bite. He smells so good, like a mandarin bursting fat and sweet on his tongue, intoxicating in its debauchery. “Fuck,” he groans, still pumping his fist. “You are maddening.”

“I’m yours,” is all Hannibal replies, and Will closes his eyes. He brings a hand again to the edge of Hannibal’s soft, velvety wing. “Don’t—” Hannibal starts, then the words are lost in a gasp as Will strokes up and down, circling his finger over the soft surface of the skin there.

Will knows he's close, and begins to rut against Hannibal's thigh, thrusting his sensitive cock into whatever purchase he can find as he pumps Hannibal and strokes his wing simultaneously, feeling depraved in his wantonness, the primitive urge to take his *Mate*—

And like a hammer falling to bring sparks forth from an anvil, Will *knows*. As he processes that realisation, he falls over the edge, waves cascading through his body as he orgasms, spilling straight into his pants. Hannibal convulses, too, and Will can feel his hot cum slicking his fist and coating his hand. He feels more pleasure than he's ever felt before as they finish simultaneously, ecstasy springing between them and filling the air with a sweet, dark scent, like a handful of orchids spilling across the forest floor. His knees buckle, and he brings his hands to clutch at Hannibal's arms and chest as they both sink down into a puddle on the floor. They lie like that for several minutes, panting, rolling on the waves of their mutual pleasure. It's overwhelming in its sick, beautiful depravity.

Eventually, Will pushes himself up. He looks dead in Hannibal's eyes, for once not shrinking away from the prospect of being seen. He sinks into the warm, golden pools there. The word is simple, almost mocking in its clarity.

"*Mate*."

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

sorry for the delay on this chapter! hope the story makes up for it :3

bound in blood the deer lingers

fall behind and lose the herd

hollow safety, hollow shelter

vast doom looms above them all

black on black, the shadows deepen

earth weeps death in silent woe

spinning, tiny, comprehending

coals and embers start to glow

shooting smoke through

gilded veins

"*Mate*."

Hearing him say that word, understanding that he knows it, fills me with an icy, crawling feeling. I want to rejoice, but the prospect that this might be the beginning of our end is obvious to me, and the happiness that I can feel threatening to break through the cool surface of my face is battling with another, more pungent emotion: fear. I stare into Will's eyes, light and wary. He's close enough to see straight through me.

"Yes." It does feel good to finally be able to admit it.

"How long?"

"A while."

Will closes his eyes. "What does it mean?"

True words threaten to pour off my tongue. *It means that you're the only one who's ever seen me. It means I will kill anyone who means you harm. It means I want to destroy you and worship you in equal measure. It means I open my doors to you, no matter where that might lead us. It means I'd be happy to die at your hands.* "That you're mine."

Will lies there, and through the remnants of vicious ecstasy I crawl forward, over his body. There I still, waiting for him to open his eyes. When he does, I can see all the emotions crowding behind his blown pupils: anger, frustration, fear. But he opens his mouth and the word is soft, silken in the dusk growing thick between us. "Mine."

It fills me with a light and airy happiness, a feeling which is more than foreign to me, but I savour it. I want this feeling to last forever. But they don't, so instead I close my eyes, tilting my head down ever so slightly, and breathe in Will's scent. It's all wrong, marred by time and whiskey, but it's real, and it encapsulates the moment. I add it to the little collection tucked away in my mind, file the scent in a drawer. I bring my mouth to his and whisper the prayer through dry lips. "Yours."

They spend the night wrapped around each other. They shower together, and Hannibal washes Will's back tenderly, running hands over his ribs, sticking out far more than they should be, pulling nimble fingers through his overgrown hair, pressing kisses to his beard. After the shower, he wraps Will in a warm, fluffy towel, and sits him on a stool in the kitchen. Then he procures a straight razor, an electric beard trimmer, and a pair of sharp scissors, and begins to groom Will. Will studies the high planes of Hannibal's face, the glinting eyes set in his fine-featured face, the way he moves so carefully and fluidly with all the grace of a dancer. Dark locks of hair fall to the kitchen floor, stark against the pale marble. The blade of the straight razor is sharp against his cheek. The exposure sets a thrum through Will's veins: with one slip of the knife, he could be bleeding out on the floor, red flooding over white.

"Stay still," murmurs Hannibal.

"I am still," Will replies, shifting in his stool. "Sorry. I want to kiss you."

"And I you. But I'd rather get you cleaned up first." A smile dances around Hannibal's lips, the way he's noticed it does, and Will's belly surges with contentment. This is it. This is *right*. He begrudges Hannibal for nothing, now, if this is what he was offering all along. His feels as if his old life is a quickly fading memory as he sinks deeper into the euphoria filling his body as he grows accustomed to their bond.

Will quiets and lets his Mate finish cleaning him up, smiling as Hannibal towels shaving cream off his face and presses a kiss to his forehead. "Perfect," Hannibal whispers against Will's soft, damp skin.

Will stands, bringing his lips to kiss Hannibal deeply. He tastes clean and warm. He tastes like home.

This time is soft. Hannibal lays him gently on the floor and leaves a trail of kisses all over Will's warm, clean body. He takes Will gently in his mouth, presses fingers softly inside. Will's never done that before, never let anyone touch him like that, but Hannibal is soft and insistent and strong, clutching his thighs and kissing lightly over his stomach and chest. As Hannibal takes Will's hard length into his mouth, Will feels sharp incisors brushing lightly over his shaft, but the sensation only adds another layer of pleasure to the symphony building in that room. "Jesus," he groans, as Hannibal licks him and thrusts his fingers at the same time. "That feels so good." And it does; it feels electric. The sight of Hannibal between his legs, taking him in his mouth, is too much and he has to keep his eyes closed, but that only makes the pleasurable sensations stronger, and when Hannibal enters him, filling him entirely and leaning over his body to kiss his neck, Will wants to scream. Instead he scrabbles his fingers on Hannibal's back and groans as they move together, both panting and lost in the feeling of trying to consume the other in this way. Will lets go, letting his mind drift away, submitting to the feeling of holding Hannibal. As his mind detaches, so does his attachment to the last shreds of his humanity. He pictures it like a cloth being torn in two and finally coming apart, fluttering off on a breeze. He doesn't need it anymore. They both have everything they need right here.

After, lying in their bed in the cool dark, their words are soft and lost in the richly furnished room.

I missed you. Don't leave me again.

Never.

Will falls easy back into this life. After being away for so long, it feels so right to be back with him. It's addicting in its intensity; he's never felt like this before, vibrating with a protective, manic energy. He's been in love before, but he's never experienced this level of ecstasy. They don't leave the house for days because he can't bear to be apart from Hannibal, and vice versa. All their time is spent together, talking, reading, laughing. They're naked more often than clothed. Every time they make love is a revelation. Every kiss is magic.

Hannibal explains to him about vampire bonds, how sometimes, rarely, they're forged when someone is Made. "Everyone has a bond to their Maker," he says. "It's inevitable when you give so much of something to someone. It's very rare, but I have read cases where the Maker transfers powers to their Mate. They can transfer… feelings, too."

Will cocks his head. They're lounging in the sitting room, some classical music softly filling the room. "Feelings?"

“Yes. I don’t know much else.” Hannibal’s eyes drift across the page of the book he’s reading, then quickly glance up to Will’s. The slightly crinkle at the edges is the only acknowledgment he gives Will, the rest of his face smooth and unyielding. Truly perfect, his golden eyes gleaming in the soft lamplight. He tucks his hair behind his ear, and Will’s mouth waters as he studies the curve of Hannibal’s ear, the swell of his neck. He feels insatiable. A slave to the hormones released when the bond crashes home; that’s how Hannibal explained it. As if they’re nothing but animals.

Animal, human, vampire. They all need to eat. It’s been a few days, and a cold truth is sinking in around Will: they need to feed.

“I’ll go,” he says.

“No,” says Hannibal. “No. I’ll be quicker. In and out. You’re still weak.”

Will glares at Hannibal, lip curling slightly to reveal his sharp canines. “You aren’t going *anywhere*.” The words are final. Will puts on his coat and Hannibal says nothing, just watches him with a brooding look, mouth pursing a little. Will stalks out into the night, heading into the city, moving from shadow to shadow. The full moon is fat above him, casting silver over the tarmac, glinting off the cars. As he moves away from the house, his belly fills with an acrid anxiety. The further away from Hannibal he gets, the more his worry grows. *Everything will be fine. In and out.*

From an alleyway, he scans a group of college students chatting outside a bar, trying to see if any of them are good targets. It’s heavy being back here, picking off prey like an animal. But the prospect of a good meal makes his stomach growl. It’s been too long since he’s indulged himself.

Suddenly, he’s overcome by a surge of intense fury, frothing over his body like a tidal wave. This is followed by pain, like he was just struck by something heavy, except he’s alone. He doubles over, slapping a hand to his abdomen, his mind brutally recalling the last time he was shot. “Fuck!” A pain lances across his chest, but fear overrides it. Suddenly, uninhibited, an image of Hannibal comes to his mind, and in a moment of perfect clarity, he knows that something is terribly, terribly wrong.

He tears out of the alley, stumbling slightly against the rough brick wall of the building he’s lurking by. His mind doesn’t even register the scrape of stone against his shoulder as he put one foot in front of the other, over and over again, running as fast as he possibly can through the pain and fear filling his veins. The college students start jeering at him, obviously thinking he’s drunk, but he pushes through them and onwards. As he moves, the phantom pain slowly starts to dissipate, and is replaced by pure adrenaline which drives his feet forward until he’s running, full pelt down the streets of Baltimore. He’s only ventured a few miles from home, so it’s not too long before Hannibal’s house comes into view.

Will’s blood runs cold as he takes in what’s happened. The front door is hanging off its hinges, swinging slowly in the cold night air. There are deep gouges in the wood of the porch. His ears start to ring. As he stumbles up the steps, moving slower now, he feels like time has slowed down into putty around him as he takes in the blood spattered across the wall. His mind begins to whir, falling back on what he knows about splatter patterns, piecing together

the scene. But he's never been so angry. He's never vibrated with so much rage. He can barely see as he whips his head around and stares at the carnage before him. Furniture knocked aside, blood splashed up the wall. "No, no, NO!"

Will runs through a hand through his hair and closes his eyes. His pulse is hammering, making him feel sick with its force. *Step back. Use your eyes. What's the story here?* Forced entry. Bookcase knocked to the floor: a scuffle. Blood up the wall, pooling on the floor. Arterial spray. A knife wound. Sharp, too. Probably Hannibal's. The thought brings a rising panic in Will, filling his body from the tips of his toes and rushing up his legs with its cold, icy truth. *Come on, think, think!* Blood pooling on the floor. That could be from either of them. Blood, blood, blood. Why is there so much fucking blood?

Will turns away suddenly from the scene, stumbling out onto the porch. The night air feels like he's had a bucket of ice water tipped on his head, and he welcomes it. He leans against the wood of the house, next to the front door, staring up at the rafters of the porch. The wall is cool and solid against his back. His mind flicks through every possibility, thinking of every angle. Who has Hannibal pissed off? Who wants to hurt him? So many people, probably. Had he been noticed by someone when hunting? Revenge for killing a loved one? What about that vampire—could he have had something to do with this? What was that Hannibal had said, once? *I wanted to teach him. But he wasn't… worthy.* Who? Who?

A rage builds in him as he thinks of who would hurt Hannibal, and under the rage is fear, raw and writhing in its bitterness. The rage is clear, but the fear is murky, setting his teeth on edge and quickening his pulse. He tries to think about the next steps, tries to latch on to a tangible thing to do in order to bring himself back down to earth, to focus. He needs to focus. What should he do? Call Jack? Track down that vampire? The police? As he turns over options, he realises something. That when he calms down a little, when he focuses, he can feel something. Something different in his chest. A little flutter, a little tug. Like a child tugging at your shirt sleeve.

He can feel Hannibal.

Will doesn't even think about it as he opens his eyes and launches into the air, great dark wings opening up behind him, wrenching from his back. He doesn't even feel the pain as they rip through his shoulder blades, but beats them once, twice, three times, experimentally. After a few seconds, it feels as natural as moving an arm.

He knows what to do. All he has to do is follow that tug, and it'll lead him back to Hannibal. Back to his *Mate*. He doesn't know what he'll find at the other end, but he doesn't care. Hannibal's going to be there, and that's all that matters.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

> thank you all for waiting for the final chapter of gilded veins! I hope you all enjoy the suitably bloody ending!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

bound in blood the serpent thrashes

at last the thirst is quenched in full

curling tail of satisfaction

slowly, slowly, turning numb

sink now, into blissful slumber

a final end, the last to fly

mate for ever

hours seconds passing by

ripped apart through

gilded veins

The house looms towards him in the dark. Will stares at it from under thick, furrowed brows, his amber eyes glowing in the gloom. It's isolated, dilapidated; he's travelled for miles through the cold night air, drawn along the current of Hannibal tugging him along. Now he's here and he knows from the thrumming connection in his chest that Hannibal is also here, that somewhere inside this house is his *Mate* and Will would do anything to get him back. *Anything*.

A flicker in his gut, of Hannibal, a rush of anger and contempt towards something so specific. Hate for… someone. Hannibal had said they could share things across their bond, and the emotions, not all of them his own, are making it impossible for Will to think straight. The cool night air caresses Will's trembling, leathery wings still spread wide behind him. An owl hoots. He's still filled with such a primal anger. Something within him knows this is what he was made for and delights in the prospect of the feel of blood on his hands. If there was any rational part of his brain left, he'd be aghast at what Hannibal had managed to turn him into;

but, alas, he doesn't feel like there *is* a rational part of his brain left, just that instinctual predatory drive to rescue his mate from any danger. He doesn't want to think about that. Best just to move.

He stalks closer to the house, feet soft against overgrown grass, and presses his face to the window, craning his neck to see inside. His breath catches in his throat. "Oh," he murmurs, fighting hard to keep composure. Inside the dimly-lit room, Hannibal is tied to a chair, bruised, a bloody wound marring his perfect face. Seeing blood drying on his beautiful curved mouth sets a fire in Will's belly.

Abruptly, Hannibal jerks his head and meets Will's eyes through the clouded glass. Will presses his face closer to the window, desperate to see the situation his Mate in his. A wave of anger floods over him, then there's a great *crash*, glass shattering; Will is thrown back by the force of something hitting his face *hard*. Not used to the weight of the wings on his back, he's flung to the floor. Adrenaline courses through his system as he crushes his sensitive wings and he hisses, rolling. He stops on all fours, eyes up and searching for the cause of the pain. The kidnapper smashed something through the little window, striking him, but now Will can't see anything or anyone. He has to make a split decision. Has the kidnapper stayed in the room with Hannibal, or has he run to the front door in the hopes of taking Will down in the yard? Should Will try to burst through the open window from the outside, or run into the house and find the room from the inside? Will thinks about what he would do if he were the kidnapper, takes that step back in time and headspace into the mind of a killer—he used to do this all the time, he was so *good* at it—but it's all jumbled up, he's a killer now, too—and then Will is on the receiving end of a wicked blow to the head; he falls forward, stunned.

When Will is dragged into the room, my heart begins to beat so slowly I think that it might actually stop. The instinctual need for control makes me sit perfectly still and I take care not to let my eyes react to the sudden intrusion. The acrid taste of the cloth stuffed in my mouth as a rudimentary gag is momentarily forgotten as I add Will to the list of things important to the current situation. The camera in the corner of the room interests me, though I probably won't get a chance to question Dolarhyde—for that's his name, I know that much—very deeply about it. I don't think I'll give him a chance to talk about anything. It's hard to have a decent conversation when your tongue's been ripped out of your mouth.

But, first: Will.

"Lurking out there. With you, I think, Dr Lecter." His voice is clipped, strange-sounding due to his cleft lip; he avoids certain sounds, giving him a stilted, unnerving way of speaking. His energy, too, is dangerous: cold and still and predatory. Familiar.

He looks at me, remembers that I'm gagged, and comes over, pulling the wad of fabric from my mouth. Lips dry, I croak, "A regretful acquisition." Dolarhyde pierces me with that unusual, hooded gaze. Behind his eyes it's dead, not like the fire which blazes in my Mate. Dolarhyde is interesting, but he's not *worthy*.

Will stirs, and Dolarhyde moves quickly to his body, kneeling on the floor by Will's chest. He threads one of his large hands in Will's hair and yanks from the scalp, pulling Will's head off the floor like he's a doll. I inhale very slightly. My mind races as I stretch my hands against the rough bonds of rope securing them tightly to the chair; similar ones are around my ankles. I'm sure I could snap them easily with enough force, and will definitely try if Dolarhyde looks to be about to kill Will—who I'm more than certain is only going to die by my hand—but for now I wait.

"But you turned him. And you didn't want to turn me. Why?"

"I wish I had never turned him," I lie. "I thought he was ready, that he was worthy, but he's not. I see something better in you."

Dolarhyde seems flattered, but still confused. He stares at Will's prone body. "So you won't mind if I kill him now? Here, on the floor?"

A wave of acid in my throat. "Do you think that would impress me?"

"No." Dolarhyde inspects Will again. When he speaks, his voice is matter-of-fact, as if we're discussing the weather. "Tell me why I can't rip his throat out."

"That decision isn't mine to make. If you wish to kill him, be done with it and kill him."

He seems thoughtful. "Alright," he finally says, in that carefully-enunciated way of his. A small noise escapes Will's lips. I have to think quickly. I can feel him stirring, in that place in my gut he managed to unlock when he crashed into my life. When I think back to that first night, where I stole him away to use as feed, compared to now—here, on this dirty floor, my fault—I can't believe that the strings of fate have tugged us together and presented us with such a *delicious* opportunity.

Dolarhyde had incapacitated me and I don't even he ever really thought about why it had been so easy. I spread my magic and watch the muscles of his jaw and face go slack as time slows down for him and his mind begins to blur. Focusing half my mind on that, I cast the other half out to Will, tugging on that gleaming connection between us.

"Will," I murmur. Blood is smeared thick on his mouth and face and my mouth aches with the desire to lick it off, to feel Will completely within me, part of me, my cells—*no*, I tell myself, not now. "Will." He stirs, then slowly opens his eyes. I feel a warm smile gush across my features. "Be careful. You've sustained a serious head wound."

Will begins to sit up, wincing in obvious discomfort, but his vampire body is strong and soon he's by my side, crouching by my knees and running his hands over my thighs, touching his fingers to my neck. He is furious, and my heart sings to behold it. Dolarhyde is immobilised behind him, suspended in time like a marionette. He had been on the verge of killing Will and my blood rages to consider it.

"Are you okay?" His voice is tinged with a dark, scathing anger. Fear, too, coats his words. Neither directed at me, no, no: at whoever was the cause of this misery. I've never heard him sound like this before, though I always knew it was inside him, and it thrills me. I can feel

myself growing hard in my pants at the combination of Will's anger and the bonds around my wrists, the scent of blood in the air, the thrum of pleasure I feel deep in my bones to be so close to my beautiful Mate. I nod to my captor and Will turns, almost snarling like a feral animal. He stalks towards Dolarhyde and picks him up by the throat, pulling him easily into the air. The would-be murderer is still stuck, still wrapped in my immobilising magic, struggling in extreme slow-motion, and Will holds him aloft like a trophy. Will's grip tightens, beginning to crush the bony column of the man's throat. To see Will's anger, raw and liquid, spilling out of him, delights me. My body floods with sick adrenaline. My eyes are fixed on Will's face, on the subtle twisting of his features, the narrowing of his deep amber eyes clouded with fury.

The carnal need to lose myself in Will's flesh is almost unbearable. But I soothe myself, try and calm the roiling in my blood, because I know several things first need to happen. Will has done so, so well to return to me, time after time, and has dived into his transformation with more enthusiasm than I had expected. My heart swells a little with pride as I gaze upon this creature of the night, his eyes glowing, sleek black wings spread out behind him, filling the room. Something I had never expected, no doubt gifted to him when I forged the bond between us. I whisper to him. "He wanted to Become. I rejected him. Not everyone is worthy."

Without warning, I release the hold on my magic and time catches up to the present moment; suddenly Dolarhyde is heavy, and struggling, and Will's grip tightens even further, the muscles in his arm flexing with the pressure of holding the man. Dolarhyde kicks and swipes at the hand wrapped around his throat with the desperate scrabbling of a trapped animal, and Will lunges forward, pinning Dolarhyde against the wall and crushing his throat with no remorse. My mouth opens slightly as Dolarhyde's eyes glass over, as Will's fingers clench, piercing flesh as easily as if it were butter. Messy, yes, but so very *visceral*. I consume the image of my Mate killing someone so wantonly, my mouth growing dry. Finally, once the man has stilled, the life drained out of him, Will releases his throat and steps back as Dolarhyde's body thuds to the floor.

Will is covered in blood and filled with rage. His body ceaselessly vibrates with the adrenaline he needed to come here and do this, to kill a man not for survival but for *revenge.* It had all been for Hannibal, all for the man who had turned him without asking whether Will wanted to be turned, for the man who had dragged him into this world and buried his fingers in Will's mind and tugged and pulled in all directions until Will had snapped and been forced to become what he had always feared because if he didn't, he would die, and he didn't want to die not now he had met Hannibal.

The blood is drying sticky on his hands; he can feel it tightening on his skin. Will turns and comes to stand in front of Hannibal, still bound in his chair. He looks down at the man trapped before him. He could kill him, and they both know it. Without once breaking eye contact, Will brings a thumb to Hannibal's mouth, slipping it gently inside, pulling slightly on

his lower lip. When he brings his thumb back out, Hannibal's lip is smeared with Dolarhyde's blood. "I don't want someone else to kill you."

Hannibal says nothing; his large, deep eyes glimmer with a savage understanding. "Of course."

Will brings his lips to Hannibal's, tasting Dolarhyde's blood there. It's bitter, it's decadent in its wickedness; their tongues clash together, Will nips at Hannibal's lower lip then straddles Hannibal, almost pushing the rickety chair over. He can feel Hannibal's hardness rubbing against his own, with too many layers of clothes between them, and he can't get enough of Hannibal's mouth, can't resist flicking his tongue against his Mate's sharp canines.

Suddenly Hannibal pulls back, panting, mouth wet from Will's kisses. "Drink," he rasps. Will blinks at him, then glances to Dolarhyde. "Now," continues Hannibal, urgency in his voice. "Before he's dry." Standing, Will moves to undo Hannibal's restraints, but Hannibal jerks away from him and shakes his head. "No. Just drink." Will studies the bound vampire. They've slept together plenty of times after sharing a feed, with blood still warm on their hands and mouths, because the pleasure and ecstasy of sating yourself make sex all the better, heightening every delightful touch and sensation. But this feels… different. Will sees the barely-restrained urgency in Hannibal, the need to witness Will's depravity, to feel like he had a hand in it, and though Will wishes it didn't, it delights him too.

Dolarhyde remains on the very knife-edge of life, eyes dimming but still aware as Will kneels beside him. Will flicks his eyes up so he can observe Hannibal from this vantage point and then, without breaking eye contact, leans forward and brings his teeth to Dolarhyde's neck. He barely has to sink his teeth, the flesh there is already so broken, and blood flows into his mouth. It's rich, dark, sinful; Will's eyes strain as he struggles to hold eye contact with Hannibal, waves of pleasure cascading down his body from head to toe.

Will succumbs, eventually, and closes his eyes. The blood warms his belly. He groans into the sweet, rich flesh filling his mouth. His erection strains against his jeans, igniting a pressure he needs to release. His mind is so hazy from the blood that he barely registers the small sound that Hannibal releases as he suckles, but eventually something filters into his subconscious and he snaps his eyes open. *Hannibal*. He's on him in a flash, pushing his slick lips across Hannibal's jaw in a slippery kiss, then another, until their mouths are together again and it is beautiful, it is perfect, and Will *must* have his Mate this instance, or he might explode. A low groan escapes his throat as his hands clutch at Hannibal, pushing him onto the floor. There's a chair in the way, and Will pulls it apart with his hands, pulling Hannibal's trousers down roughly to expose his bare, beautiful ass. Hannibal pants below him as Will fumbles with his zipper.

Will's hand on his swollen cock is transcendent, the touch almost burning in its intensity, and he needs to be inside his Mate *now*, before he explodes, so he slicks his cock with spit and blood and slips inside Hannibal, who bucks beneath him, hands still tangled together behind his back with his loose restraints, still connected to splintered bits of chair, Will's forearm resting on his curled hands, holding him to the floor as he fucks him, hard, the pleasure unfathomable. Every sick thrust against Hannibal's ass pulls a little moan from the both of them. Will curls over Hannibal's back, nipping at his lover's ear and smiling into the crook of

Hannibal's neck. He feels crazed, mounting and fucking him like an animal into the floor, but he can tell Hannibal needs it just as much as he does, and licks a wet stripe up Hannibal's neck, tasting salt and copper on his tongue. He leaves a thin trail of their victim's blood in his wake. He comes, hard. Twitch after twitch vibrates through him, his groin contracting with pleasure, over and over, filling his Mate. It is greater than anything he's ever known.

Will collapses over Hannibal, sighing. The feeding haze is beginning to wear off, the strength of his orgasm overpowering. He brings a hand to Hannibal's cock and jerks once, twice, still thrusting gently inside Hannibal's ass, his cock still half-hard and seeking punishment. Hannibal comes, thick ropes over Will's fist. They lie there, in that house, for some time, curled up on the dusty floor together, whispering into the night. Eventually, though, Hannibal notices it's nearly dawn. So they tug on their clothes and depart, swooping quickly into the air in tandem. The two vampires fly together over the city, back to their home, running from the sun.

Chapter End Notes

THANK YOU FOR FOLLOWING ALONG WITH MY LITTLE VAMPIRE FIC !!! I hope you all enjoyed <3

End Notes

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